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ABSTRACT

E. Husserl's concept of intentionality provides a conceptual perspective of interpersonal communication that suggests a notion of face-to-face communication called "interaction involvement." Structured along dimensions of awareness and responsiveness, interaction involvement explains interpersonal communication as a transactional relationship involving the elements of self, others, and situations. To test the validity of interaction involvement as a theoretical construct, eighteen questionnaire items were developed to represent the dimensions of awareness and responsiveness, and 326 individuals provided their responses to the items. Overall, the factor analysis of those responses provided reasonable support for the constructs of awareness and responsiveness as dimensions of interaction involvement. In view of this research, interaction involvement appears to be a rather fundamental dimension of interpersonal communication, more abstract yet more pervasive than the concept of communicative competence. (RL)

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# INTERACTION INVOLVEMENT:

# A FUNDAMENTAL DIMENSION OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

Husserl's concept of intentionality is used as the basis for a conceptual perspective on interpersonal communication. The concept of interaction involvement is derived from this perspective, suggesting that it is a fundamental dimension of face to face communication. An operational definition is then provided for interaction involvement and data are reported to support the construct validity of the operational definition. Implications for the role of interaction involvement in future research on communicative competence and interpersonal communication are discussed.

## INTERACTION INVOLVEMENT:
## A FUNDAMENTAL DIMENSION OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

The purpose of this research is to articulate the concept of interaction involvement as a fundamental requisite to communicative competence. Two aspects of the term "communicative competence" as it is used in this essay require immediate clarification. First, competence refers to a performance-based concept and should not be confused with linguistic competence. The latter is concerned with knowledge of language, while communicative competence is concerned with knowing when and how to use language in the social context (see Allen & Brown, 1976). Second, competence pertains to communication in interpersonal, face-to-face contexts. It is not intended to apply to mediated or public communication, although some application to these contexts may be possible.

### Communicative Competence

Considerable attention has been given recently to the concept of communicative competence. Some of this research has focused on the developmental aspects of communicative competence (see Allen & Brown, 1976) while other work has examined the dimensionality of competence in adults (e.g., Wiemann, 1977a; Bochner & Kelly, 1974; Ruben, 1976; Backlund, 1977a; Norton, 1978). Although useful information is available regarding the developmental and dimensionality aspects of communicative competence, there appear to be major conceptual problems in the literature (Backlund, 1977b). For example, some researchers define competence in terms of goal attainment, thus, emphasizing a control orientation (Parks, 1977). Other researchers use the concept of appropriateness as the major criterion in defining competence (Weinstein, 1966; Wiemann,

1977a, 1977b; Backlund, 1977a), while some define competence in terms of interpersonal effectiveness (Wiemann, 1977b; Bochner & Kelly, 1974). Similarly, there is considerable diversity in the proposed behavioral dimensions of communicative competence, although Wiemann's (1977b) review of the literature suggests that the various dimensions converge into empathy, behavioral flexibility and interaction management. In short, reviews of the communication competence literature suggest considerable ambiguity concerning the conceptualization and operationalization of competence (Wiemann, 1977b; Backlund, 1977b; Parks, 1977).

In the author's opinion, a major source of this ambiguity appears related to the diversity of perspectives on communication upon which competency models are based. In addition, it is not uncommon in the literature for researchers to provide a definition for communicative competence but not provide a clearly articulated perspective on human communication. Given the diversity of views on what constitutes interpersonal communication (see Miller, 1978; Bochner, 1978), it would seem necessary for communication competency researchers to specify clearly what they mean by communication. Moreover, this requisite appears consistent with suggestions from Delia (1977) and others that communication scholars explicate as clearly as possible those root metaphors and assumptions upon which research efforts are based. Accordingly, the first part of this paper is intended as an articulation of a perspective on interpersonal communication. The perspective is intended to serve two functions. First, it serves as a general conceptual framework of assumptions about interpersonal communication in which to ground the concept of competence. Second, it is designed to serve as the basis for the derivation of the concept of interaction involvement as a fundamental

dimension of interpersonal communication. This function is of particular importance in light of most current research on communicative competence.

Considerable effort in current research is directed at the specification of various dimensions of communicative competence. As indicated already, the result of this research is a variety of dimensions of competence which appear to have little clear relationship to a theoretical view of human communication. Dimensions such as empathy, interaction management, social insight, affiliation, social relaxation, dominance and a host of others seem to relate to communicative competence in varying degrees under certain conditions and in particular contexts, but they appear less useful as fundamental aspects of a general communicative competence concept. However, the perspective offered here attempts to lend conceptual support to a variety of specific dimensions of competence rather than serving as an argument against them. The concept of interaction involvement is considered fundamental to all currently proposed dimensions of communicative competence and, as such, serves to bridge several investigations. In a sense, the concept of interaction involvement addresses the question: how is competent communication (however dimensionalized) even possible?

A Perspective on Communication

Among recent attempts to delineate parameters for the concept of communication, Scott's (1977) appears most useful for the purposes of this essay. Scott argues that intentionality and sociality are necessary, though not sufficient, concepts for defining communication for scholarly and research purposes. Following Husserl (1962), Scott views intentionality as the content of human consciousness. By doing so, he underscores the idea that human consciousness is always of something, it is always directed.

Viewed in this way, as long as humans are conscious they have intentionality; it is the source of human experiencing. However, it is important to note that one may distinguish between intentionality as a constant state of consciousness, and having intentions. The latter are particular focuses of intentionality, such as, one's intention to pick up an object, explain an idea, or manipulate another. The distinction is central to Scott's argument for including the concept of intentionality as a necessary element of communication.

Scott notes that traditionally some scholars have been reluctant to emphasize the concept of intentionality in their attempts to define communication. This reluctance is traced to the influence of "old rhetoric," which emphasized intentionality as a particular intention, i.e., the speaker's purpose. Several scholars, including Scott, agree that this view of intentionality limits "the scope necessary for conceptual interconnections that are promising for the scholarly and scientific development of the field" (Scott, 1977, p. 263). However, by grounding the meaning of intention in intentionality, as discussed earlier, Scott attempts to focus the concept as a parameter of human communication. He states:

> Or, to put the matter a little differently, when we are aware of having intentions, we begin to account for our own intentionality. By such an accounting, we are in a position to understand our behaviors as the actions of agents and to understand the behavior of others as like actions. And herein lies the generating force of human communication. (p. 263)

Scott's observation implies two important points about the role of intentionality in human communication: (1) humans by nature are intentional beings, and (2) humans recognize each other as intentional agents. The former assertion suggests that humans' intentionality distinguishes them from other types of objects in the physical environment. This is not to say that other objects, like animals, are without intentionality. It seems reasonable to suggest that animals are conscious beings, some with states of mind that may be akin to ours (see Hamlyn, 1974). However, the majority of evidence to date suggests that "lower" animal forms at best are able to share the human's form of life only partially. Even animals such as chimpanzees, which are able to learn and use some form of language, appear to be limited in the kinds of states of mind they can share with humans. Accordingly, human intentionality appears unique. No other objects in the physical environment seem to have quite the same kind of intentionality as do humans.

The observation that human intentionality is unique perhaps in some respects is a trivial one. The implication is that only humans can experience a human world view. While trivial in one sense, this may also be one of those "givens" which is so taken for granted that its potential importance often eludes our thinking about the human communication process. However different each of our individual perceptions and interpretations may be, it seems that <u>as humans</u> we have a commonality of perspective that is not shared with any other objects in the physical environment. This commonality provides the basis for the uniqueness of human-to-human relationships and, as such, has potential implications for our understanding of the communication process.

Perhaps most fundamental is that our knowledge of human intentionality is acquired through communication. Because humans can communicate, they are provided the means for understanding human intentionality as a uniquely human experience. We do not know how other life forms experience the world because we cannot exchange information with them adequately enough to understand their life condition. However, through language humans are able to focus and share their intentionality. It has been suggested that human consciousness is always of something and, therefore, is intentional. It is largely through humans' ability to symbolize that our consciousness is always of something, the something being a category of some kind. Language is the vehicle by which human intentionality is focused and it is the means by which humans negotiate and share their constructed worlds.

In elaborating on the implications of the uniqueness of human intentionality, we have also touched on the second major point in Scott's (1977) perspective--humans recognize each other as intentional beings. For Scott, humans' mutual recognition of intentionality is critical to establishing parameters for the communicative event. The critical implication of this position is that it underscores communication as a social phenomenon. While disagreeing with their inclusion of the term "intrapersonal communication," Scott appears to accept Ruesch and Bateson's (1968) view of communication as a social matrix. In this view, communication is established when, "a person perceives that his perception has been noted by others" (p. 28). In accepting this view, Scott chooses to distinguish between intentional beings attributing meaning to others' behavior and intentional beings jointly creating meaning. This distinction addresses the popular view esposed by Watzlawick,

Beavin and Jackson (1967) that one "cannot not communicate." Scott suggests that while this observation is often useful, it can create significant limitations for researchers if taken as an unrestricted truth. The point being that if one cannot not communicate, one cannot communicate either, as opposed to doing anything else. Under the Watzlawick, et al. perspective the term "communication" loses focus, becoming human "activity, or even human existence, generally" (Scott, 1977, p. 264). At the same time, however, Scott is not suggesting that the meanings observers attribute to others' behavior are unimportant. What he is saying is that meanings become communicatively significant when individuals mutually recognize that they are intentional beings.

Individuals' mutual recognition of one another as intentional beings appears to be an importantly unique human experience. Blumer (1953) has observed that because individuals must take one another into account as individuals their relationships are subject to subject, as opposed to object to object or even subject to object. When this mutual accounting occurs, individuals become cognizant of the fact that each is the content of the other's consciousness. The uniqueness of this relationship appears to be at the very essence of the communicative experience. When individuals recognize that they are the content of one another's consciousness, they enter into a relationship that allows for the mutual exchange of human experiencing, i.e., the communicative relationship. Intentionality is focused and sharpened through and by the relationship. Language, of course, is the vehicle for this mutual exchange. Through communication individuals share in the construction of "a" reality involving the meaning(s) of self, other and situation, or as Goffman (1974) might say, "what's going on."

To this point a general perspective has been offered on human communication. Before relating the perspective to the concept of interaction involvement it may be useful to summarize briefly the salient points in the suggested conceptual framework. First, humans by nature are intentional beings who share a world view that is unique to humans. This uniqueness provides the basis for discriminating person-to-person relationships from relationships involving other kinds of objects in the physical environment. Second, humans' mutual recognition of intentionality is necessary to the interpersonal communicative experience. The mutual recognition of intentionality delineates a unique human experience in at least two ways: (1) an object in the physical environment is recognized as human and, therefore, is seen as sharing a common world view and, (2) this mutual recognition provides the basis for the joint construction of reality through language.

This perspective is designed to serve as an articulation of fundamental assumptions about, and parameters of, human communication in face-to-face settings. As such, it is intended as a general philosophical orientation to interpersonal communication in which to ground the concept of competence. Accordingly, given this perspective one may ask: what behaviors are necessary for an individual to be considered communicatively competent?

At the bottom line, minimum communicative competencies would appear to be of two general and related types. First, it would appear that an individual must have the capacity and demonstrated ability to recognize self and others as intentional agents. Second, the competent communicator at the bare minimum must understand that substantively different behavior is called for when in the presence of a human as opposed to

other types of objects. Stated differently, these competencies suggest that the individual must understand that his/her behavior in relation to another above all else means something and that these meanings serve to define who one is and what one is doing at a moment in time. It may be reasonably safe to assume that all functional members of society demonstrate these fundamental competencies with enough regularity to avoid being institutionalized. However, it will be argued and hopefully demonstrated later in this paper, that there is enough variance in individuals' demonstration of these fundamental competencies to warrant further investigation of them and their relationship to interpersonal communication. Critical to this position and what has been articulated thus far is the concept of interaction involvement.

The Concept of Interaction Involvement

The concept of interaction involvement centers on what might be called shifts in the focus of intentionality. Recall that intentionality is always focused in the sense that consciousness necessarily has content; our consciousness is always of something. In general then, a shift in the focus of intentionality is a change in the content of consciousness, a change in the "of" of consciousness. However, as dynamic, transactional beings the specific content of our consciousness is continually changing. The concern here is with a certain kind of change (i.e., intentionality shift). This particular change centers on a more general content--the act of communicating. Allow me to elaborate.

It has been suggested that mutual intentionality recognition is a necessary parameter of interpersonal communication. It is at this point that a unique person-to-person relationship is established which provides the basis for the joint construction of reality through language.

The maintenance of this mutual reality construction requires an intentionality focus that has the communicative relationship as its dominant content. In other words, the transactional relationship involving the elements of self, other and situation must occupy pre-eminence as the content of the individual's consciousness. This orientation toward the communicative act is what is meant by interaction involvement. A high level of interaction involvement means that an individual's intentionality focus is primarily on the mutual exchange of human experiencing. Involved individuals are highly cognizant of self in relation to other and situation. They are sensitive to how self and other's verbal/nonverbal behavior constitutes a here and now reality of self and other definition and what's going on at any moment in time.

It is of critical importance that interaction involvement is seen as an orientation in the phenomenological sense (Husserl, 1962). In other words, interaction involvement operates on a reflexive level. As such, the highly involved, competent social actor develops and demonstrates an orientation to interpersonal communication events that becomes transparent to the act of communicating. An illustration may help to clarify this point. When an athlete is first learning the movements and body positions that are necessary to perform his/her sport competently there is usually a certain degree of awkwardness and constraint due to the focus of attention on the very movement itself. However, as the movements are learned they become "natural" or transparent to the overall activity. At this point the athlete is able to perform the necessary movements with smoothness and dexterity which often elude observers' recognition of the actual complexity and difficulty of the performance.

Similarly, the social actor must learn to become involved in the communication "game." He/she must acquire an orientation whereby the fundamental competencies necessary for play become transparent to the play itself. This orientation is interaction involvement. The concept is further explicated in the next section of the paper.

Dimensions of interaction involvement. Goffman (1963), among others, has used the term "involvement" in discussing essential elements of human interaction. While Goffman does not use the term "involvement" exactly as it is used in this essay, his observations may be helpful:

> In general, then, if the individual is to be in the situation in full capacity, he will be required to maintain a certain level of alertness as evidence of his availability for potential stimuli, and some orderliness and organization of personal appearance as evidence that he is alive to the gathering he is in. (Goffman, 1963, p. 30)

And later he states:

> To be engaged in an occasional activity means to sustain some kind of cognitive and affective engrossment in it, some mobilization of one's psycho-biological resources; in short, it means to be involved [sic] in it. (p. 36)

The meaning of interaction involvement as it is used in this essay perhaps can be more clearly articulated by examining various dimensions of the concept. It has been suggested to this point that interaction involvement is concerned with the extent to which the individual focuses his/her intentionality on the act of communicating. Focusing one's

intentionality in this way appears to involve at least two fundamental processes, which may be viewed as related dimensions of the concept of interaction involvement. These dimensions are awareness and responsiveness.

The awareness dimension is concerned with the perception of relevant cues in the environment. More specifically, awareness is the extent to which the individual attends to cues in the environment that may be significant to his/her understanding of self, other and situation. Several communication scholars have noted the importance of such behavior to human interaction. For example, Barnlund has observed that, "the meanings presented in Mr. A at any moment will be a result of his alertness to, and detection of, objects and circumstances in his environment" (Barnlund, 1970, p. 94). Also, Goffman (1957) has presented an insightful analysis of modes of misinvolvement, which may be viewed processes that interfere with the accurate perception of cues that are important to an understanding of what's going on in a given communication event. Similarly, Weinstein (1969) and others have noted related concepts that suggest the importance of perceptual acuity in human interaction. In essence, then, an individual's degree of interaction involvement at any point in time is partially dependent on the extent to which he/she is attending to relevant cues in the environment.

In addition to being aware of important cues, the individual also must be responsive to them. Responsiveness is concerned with the extent to which the individual integrates meanings pertinent to self, other and situation. The result of this integration provides the individual with an understanding of self and other roles[1] in relation to what's going on at a particular point in time. In other words, the responsive individual is sensitive to the nuances of the reality that is constituted by self

and other's symbolic activity. Blumer (1953) appears to capture this idea quite well:

> Each person has to view the conduct of the other in some degree from the standpoint of the other. One has to catch the other as a subject, or in terms of his being the initiator and director of his acts; thus one is led to identify what the person means, what are his intentions and how he may act. Each party to the interaction does this and thus not only takes the other into account, but takes him into account as one who, in turn, is taking him into account. This relation of subject to subject introduces a responsiveness into the interaction which is quite different from the formal responsiveness between two objects. (pp. 194-195)

The responsive individual, then, recognizes self and other as intentional agents. He/she is cognizant of the fact that one must account for another's behavior as one who is the "initiator and director of his/her own acts." In addition, the individual understands that the other is accounting for self in a similar manner. In short, responsiveness is being sensitive to the meanings which constitute the reality of the moment.

As dimensions of interaction involvement, awareness and responsiveness are viewed as fundamental aspects of the human communicative relationship. Awareness suggests that the focus of an individual's intentionality is directed to the relevant cues in the social environment to which meanings must be assigned. Through the individual's responsiveness, intentionality focus is directed to the integration of meanings that are attributed to these cues.

While it does seem possible to separate these dimensions, they appear to be highly related. For example, it would seem that an individual may demonstrate a reasonably high level of awareness as evidenced by his/her attention to various cues in the environment (e.g., another's facial expression). However, the perception of these cues would not necessarily imply understanding of the meaning of the behavior in relation to self, other and what's going on. In fact, common experience seems to suggest that humans sometimes perceive cues in the environment but do not integrate them in a way which allows them to make sense of what's going on. The reverse of this, however, does not appear to be consistent with common experience. It seems that our integration of the meanings associated with self, other and situation is contingent upon our perception of cues in the environment. In this regard, awareness and responsiveness may be viewed as successive stages in the human communication process. However, in actuality these dimensions of behavior probably do not constitute discrete shifts in intentionality focus at various points in time. As it is used here, the term "interaction involvement" is concerned with the inextricable relationship between awareness and responsiveness. The former being concerned with the attentiveness to cues in the environment, while the latter being concerned with the integration of meanings associated with those cues. Together, these processes function to provide the basis for an individual's understanding of who he/she is in relation to another and what's going on at a moment in time. Given this understanding, the individual is afforded a vast array of alternative overt behaviors from which to select in order to maintain, or in some way modify, the reality of which he/she is only a partial creator.

Operational Definition of Interaction Involvement

Thus far attention has focused on the conceptual parameters of interaction involvement. To be maximumly useful in research the concept requires an operational definition as well. Like many concepts in communication research, measurment of interaction involvement is difficult because it is process related. For example, in practice individuals do not appear to maintain a constant level of interaction involvement throughout a communication event. While speaking and listening people seem to vary the degree to which their intentionality focus is oriented to the mutual interaction among the elements of self, other and situation. Listeners often shift their intentionality focus from the speaker to matters unrelated to the topic of conversation. When this occurs the "listener" may experience a transcendence from the mutually constructed social reality to a more private, inner reality. It is only upon again attending to the speaker that the individual becomes a full partner in the mutually constructed social reality. Similar transcendent experiences may result from a variety of other kinds of listener intentionality shifts which might be generally characterized as momentary changes from a participant-observer role to an observer role.

Variance in interaction involvement does not appear limited to listener behavior, although most related research efforts seem to have focused on the listener. Speakers also seem to demonstrate intentionality shifts that are comparable to those done during listening. In general, these intentionality shifts are evidenced by speaker behavior which suggests that the relationship among self, other and what's going on has not been taken fully into account. The faux pas might be one of the clearest illustrations of this phenomenon. However, there appear to be

more subtle forms of intentionality shifts while speaking. For example, when encoding complex or embarrassing messages speakers sometimes break eye gaze, perhaps signifying a momentary intentionality focus that is primarily on self (Exline & Fehr, 1978). Similarly, speakers' verbal and nonverbal performances sometimes appear primarily to serve a self aggrandizement, as when the retelling of an experience provides an opportunity to "re-live" an event apart from how auditors may respond to the performance.

Given the process related nature of interaction involvement, the particular method of measurement reported here (i.e., paper and pencil) should be considered as an initial attempt to assess the concept. It is also important to emphasize that interaction involvement is not considered as a trait or personality characteristic of communicators that operates apart from specific context. However, the author assumed that a paper and pencil self-report scale may serve a useful purpose as a first step in the measurement of interaction involvement. Recall that interaction involvement is considered as an orientation to interpersonal communication events. As such, it was assumed that it may be initially treated as an aspect of communicator style in the general sense of the term. It was further assumed that if the concept of interaction involvement style had validity, individuals should be able to recognize it retrospectively in their own general communicative behavior. Accordingly, eighteen questionnaire items were developed by the author to represent the dimensions of awareness and responsiveness.[2] It should be emphasized that these items were the results of considerable prior research involving over 100 items and several versions of the current interaction involvement scale (Cegala, Fischbach, Sokuvitz, Maase & Smitter, 1976; Cegala, 1978).

## Procedures

### Subjects

A sample of 326 individuals completed the interaction involvement scale. The sample was composed of three general types of individuals. Approximately 52 percent of the sample consisted of undergraduate students from a large communication class at a mid-western university. The students varied considerably in academic rank ranging from freshman to senior level. Students from a local high school comprised 24 percent of the sample (average age = 17 years). The remaining 24 percent of the sample consisted of non student adults ranging widely in age (18 years to 74 years, mean age = 39 years), occupation and education. The scale was administered with the following printed directions:

> This questionnaire is designed to provide information about how people communicate. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. You only need to indicate the extent to which you feel that each questionnaire item describes your own behavior.
>
> In responding to some of the questionnaire items, you might say, 'sometimes I do that and sometimes I don't.' You should respond to each questionnaire item in a way that best describes your general manner of behavior; that is, how you tend to respond in most situations. If you cannot decide how a particular item applies to you, then mark the 'not sure' alternative. However, try to be careful and thoughtful in making all your responses.

All respondents completed the scale anonymously.

## Results and Discussion

Data were submitted to a common factor analysis model. Squared multiple correlations were used as initial commonality estimates. An eigenvalue of one or greater was set as the initial criterion for rotation, using a delta value of 0 (Kim, 1975).

The unrotated and rotated factor matrices are reported in Table 1.

--TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE--

The initial criterion for rotation suggested a three factor solution. Inspection of the rotated matrix indicates that the first two factors are primarily composed of responsiveness items. The items apparently split into two factors as an artifact of wording. Without exception the items on factor one are positively worded, while the items loading on factor two are negatively worded. Four of the items loading on factor one were intended to assess awareness, not responsiveness (i.e., items 4, 7, 12, and 13). This result would appear to be due partially to the intricate relationship between awareness and responsiveness. The third factor in the rotated matrix is awareness, although it is composed of only three items. However, other awareness items (i.e., 7 and 13) have moderately high secondary loadings on factor three, providing additional support for the interpretation of the factor as awareness.

Overall, the rotated factor structure provides reasonable support for the constructs of awareness and responsiveness as dimensions of interaction involvement. In addition, it is clear from several loadings and the factor correlations reported in Table 2 that the awareness and responsiveness dimensions are highly related. Examination of the

--TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE--

unrotated factor matrix provides even more evidence of the high

interrelationship among the items. All items have a primary loading of at least .50 on the first factor (the average loading is .59), while the average secondary loading on remaining factors is only .22. The internal reliability of the 18 items is .91. Although the initial rotation criterion indicated a three factor solution, consideration of these data suggest that a one factor solution is warranted. In addition, the one factor solution is more consistent with the conceptual view of interaction involvement as a construct intricately composed of awareness and responsiveness (see page 14). The supplementary data reported below provide added support to the efficacy of a one factor solution.

As an attempt to provide additional validity data for the interaction involvement scale, respondents were asked to complete 14 other items on related aspects of their communicative behavior. Most of these items were derived from previous research on earlier versions of the current interaction involvement scale (Cegala, et al., 1976), however, the items were selected for the present research because of their relationship to a central dimension of communicative competence--domiance or control (Parks, 1977). Accordingly, two items were designed to measure aggressiveness, while two items assessed argumentativeness (respective reliabilities were, .80 and .85). Similarly, two items were designed to assess persuasiveness and five to assess manipulativeness (respective reliabilities were, .75 and .72). The remaining three items were designed to assess overall communicative competence (reliability = .82). It was expected that interaction involvement scores (i.e., sum scores across the 18 items) would correlate significantly with the sum scores for each of these additional item sets (i.e., aggressiveness, argumentativeness, persuasiveness, manipulativeness and communication competence). The results

are reported in Table 3. As indicated, all correlations are highly significant. In light of competence models based on appropriateness of

--TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE--

behavior, it is interesting to note that the correlations involving aggressiveness and argumentativeness are lower than the ones involving persuasiveness and manipulativeness. Although the former behaviors are ways of exerting control in interpersonal settings, they often are not socially acceptable means for attaining desired goals because they connotate hostility. While also sometimes undesirable, subtle means of attaining goals (e.g., persuasiveness and manipulativeness) often are viewed as more socially appropriate behavior in our society. Overall, however, the correlation most directly supportive of the interaction involvement construct is the one involving the sum score across the competence items. This correlation was highly significant and the greatest in magnitude of all reported correlations.

Related research findings. While the scale data reported thus far lend support to the theoretical meaning of interaction involvement, information from related research is available to provide additional evidence of the construct of validity of the interaction involvement scale.

First, Cegala and Maase (1977) conducted a study in which the primary focus was on the examination of various hand gestures and demonstration of communicative intent. The study was based on Freedman's (1972) research concerning body-focused vs. object-focused gestures. According to Freedman and his associates, hand gestures may be classified according to their direction and focus to the body. Gestures which are directed to one's self (including body/object touching) are called body-focused movements, while gestures which are directed away from self and toward

the other are called object-focused movements. Freedman hypothesizes that speech accompanied by object-focused movements signifies an intent to communicate, while the occurrence of body-focused movements suggests a split in attention between self and other and, therefore, less communicative intent. While the study was designed to test this hypothesis, subjects were also asked to respond to the interaction involvement scale. It was expected that interaction involvement scores would correlate significantly positively with the frequency of object-focused movements and negatively with the frequency of body-focused movements. The obtained correlation between interaction involvement and frequency of object-focused movements was $r = .60$ ($df = 7$, $p<.05$, one-tailed), while the correlation with frequency of body-focused movements was $r = -.58$ ($df = 7$, $p<.05$, one-tailed). Although these results are based on a small sample of subjects, they lend support to the conceptual and operational definition of interaction involvement.

A second related study was conducted by Cegala, Alexander and Sokuvitz (1978). The primary focus of this study was on the examination of eye gaze avoidance and the co-occurrence of speech behavior that is associated with difficulty in encoding. Again, subjects were asked to complete the interaction involvement scale as part of the study. However, they were asked to complete the scale in reference to their communicative behavior in a specific context, namely a five minute interaction with a dyad partner. The correlations between context-specific interaction involvement scores and the extent of eye gaze while speaking and listening were: $r = .37$ ($p<.05$, one-tailed), $r = .53$ ($p<.01$, one-tailed), respectively. These results seem particularly supportive of the interaction involvement construct in light of the eye gaze literature.

Some research suggests that eye gaze while speaking and listening is fundamental to human intersubjectivity and involvement (Argyle & Cook, 1976; Exline & Fehr, 1978). Also related to the concept of intentionality focus are findings which suggest that breaks in eye gaze are indicative of an inward orientation on the part of individuals (Nielsen, 1962; Kendon, 1967; Exline & Fehr, 1978).

The third related study was conducted by Ross (1978) concerning the identification of individuals' information processing styles pertinent to televised news broadcasts. The results of Ross' study indicated that people who tended to be preoccupied with other matters during news broadcasts or to become confused about the meaning of such events scored low on the interaction involvement scale. On the other hand, those individuals who demonstrated continuous information processing during news casts and the tendency to be highly evaluative and generally responsive to such information scored highly on interaction involvement. While the concept of interaction involvement is considered most pertinent to face to face communication, it is encouraging that the scale appears capable of identifying styles of information processing concerning mediated messages. These results seem to suggest that the interaction involvement scale is tapping a fundamental orientation toward communicative events and as such may have wide application in communication research.

Implications for Future Research

This study suggests several implications for future research on communicative competence and interpersonal communication in general. The concept of interaction involvement appears to be a rather fundamental dimension of interpersonal communication. It is more abstract, yet more pervasive, than the currently posed dimensions of communicative competence.

As such, it would appear to provide a needed conceptual framework to integrate current research findings. As suggested earlier in the paper, interaction involvement appears to be a prerequisite to competent communication as defined by the more specific dimensions reported in the literature. However, it is not clear exactly how interaction involvement relates to these dimensions in specific contexts. Research is needed to bridge the gap between cognitive aspects of competence and behavioral strategies that are used in specific situations (Backlund, 1977b). It seems that the concept of interaction involvement may prove useful in this respect.

Additionally, the interaction involvement scale may prove useful in future research on competence. The data reported here lend considerable support to the construct validity of the interaction involvement scale. Even so, some caution must be exerted in using the scale for future research. As a generalized measure of communicative orientation, the scale is less likely to provide accurate prediction to individuals' communicative behavior in a specific context. Reseach on personality measures (Mischel, 1968), social learning theory (Rotter, 1975) and attitude-behavior measurement (Fishbein, 1973) clearly support this contention. While the data reported here and in Ross (1978) and Cegala and Maase (1977), suggest that the scale may have reasonable use as a generalized measure, it appears that the scale may be better used in relation to individuals' communicative behavior in specific contexts (e.g., Cegala, Alexander and Sokuvitz, 1978). Additional work is now underway in which the scale is employed in a context-specific manner in an effort to determine what, if any, verbal and nonverbal behavior patterns appear associated with varying degrees of interaction involvement. The goal of this

research is to develop alternative ways of operationalizing interaction involvement that are based on individuals' moment to moment verbal and nonverbal behavior. In addition, this research should provide useful information about behavioral correlates of perceived competent communication.

## NOTES

1. The term "roles" is used here to include formal and informal social relationships. For an extended discussion of what is meant by informal roles, see Goffman (1955).

2. Each item was scaled as follows: not at all like me; not like me; somewhat unlike me; not sure; somewhat like me; like me; very much like me. The assigned numerical values were 1 through 7, respectively. In summing across items to compute a total scale score, the polarity of one half of the items was reversed so that the greater the score the greater the degree of interaction involvement.

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TABLE 1

UNROTATED AND ROTATED FACTOR MATRICES FOR THE INTERACTION INVOLVEMENT SCALE

| Scale Items* | Unrotated Matrix F1 | F2 | F3 | Rotated Matrix F1 | F2 | F3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am keenly aware of how others perceive me during my conversations. (R) | .51 | .15 | .09 | .45 | -.16 | .02 |
| 2. My mind wanders during conversations and I often miss parts of what is going on. (A) | -.55 | .29 | .36 | .01 | .20 | .62 |
| 3. Often in conversations I'm not sure what to say, I can't seem to find the appropriate lines. (R) | -.60 | .22 | -.15 | -.09 | .56 | .08 |
| 4. I carefully observe how others respond to me during my conversations. (A) | .50 | .34 | .05 | .64 | .03 | .05 |
| 5. Often I will pretend to be listening to someone when in fact I'm thinking about something else. (A) | -.51 | .22 | .42 | -.04 | .08 | .64 |
| 6. Often in conversations I'm not sure what my role is; that is, I'm not sure how I'm expected to relate to others. (R) | -.55 | .29 | -.21 | .01 | .65 | .03 |
| 7. I listen carefully to others during a conversation. (A) | .63 | .20 | -.27 | .56 | .11 | -.36 |
| 8. Often I am preoccupied in my conversations and do not pay complete attention to the others. (A) | -.61 | .27 | .34 | -.04 | .22 | .61 |
| 9. Often in conversations I'm not sure what the other is really saying. (R) | -.53 | .32 | -.12 | .06 | .59 | .14 |
| 10. Often in conversations I am not sure what others' needs (e.g., reassurance, a compliment, etc.) are until it is too late to respond appropriately. (R) | -.56 | .12 | -.20 | -.18 | .50 | -.02 |
| 11. During conversations I am sensitive to others' subtle or hidden meanings. (R) | .50 | .25 | .13 | .53 | -.11 | .10 |
| 12. I am very observant during my conversations with others. (A) | .73 | .38 | -.01 | .81 | .01 | -.06 |
| 13. In conversations I pay close attention to what others say and do and try to obtain as much information as I can. (A) | .70 | .27 | -.24 | .68 | .12 | -.33 |
| 14. Often I feel sort of "unplugged" from the social situation of which I am part; that is, I'm uncertain of my role, others' motives, and what's happening. (R) | -.56 | .28 | -.22 | -.00 | .65 | .03 |

TABLE 1 (cont'd.)

| Scale Items* | Unrotated Matrix F1 | F2 | F3 | Rotated Matrix F1 | F2 | F3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. In my conversations I really know what's going on; that is, I have a "handle on the situation." (R) | .66 | .05 | .14 | .41 | -.36 | -.01 |
| 16. In my conversations I can accurately perceive others' intentions quite well. (R) | .64 | .21 | .20 | .57 | -.26 | .12 |
| 17. Often in conversations I'm not sure how I'm expected to respond. (R) | -.61 | .28 | -.20 | -.03 | .67 | .05 |
| 18. In conversations I am responsive to the meaning of others' behavior in relation to myself and the situation. (R) | .60 | .29 | -.02 | .64 | -.00 | -.06 |
| Eigenvalue | 6.80 | 1.73 | 1.35 | 6.28 | 1.20 | .84 |
| Percent of total variance | 37.8 | 9.6 | 7.5 | | | |
| Percent of common variance | 68.8 | 17.5 | 13.7 | 75.4 | 14.4 | 10.1 |

*The A or R after items indicates awareness or responsiveness, respectively.

TABLE 2

CORRELATIONS AMONG THE FACTORS OF THE ROTATED MATRIX

| | F1 | F2 | F3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| F1 | 1.00 | -.54 | -.37 |
| F2 | | 1.00 | .42 |
| F3 | | | 1.00 |

TABLE 3

PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN INTERACTION INVOLVEMENT AND SELECTED SUBSCALES

| Subscales | Correlation with Interaction Involvement |
|---|---|
| Aggressiveness: | |
| I am an aggressive person in many social situations. I am often inclined to go out of my way to win a point with someone who has opposed me. | .24, p<.01 |
| Argumentativeness: | |
| I will usually persist in an argument until my point is made. I really enjoy the challenge of a good argument. | .24, p<.01 |
| Persuasiveness: | |
| I consider myself to be an effective persuader; that is, I can generally influence people in ways that I desire. *I am usually easily persuaded. | .35, p<.0005 |
| Manipulativeness: | |
| When talking with others I usually observe them carefully to determine what they are thinking. I often try to predict what other people will do or how they will respond to certain things on the basis of information that I have about them. When attempting to anticipate another's behavior, I can often successfully view the situation as they might view it. I am a reasonably good actor; that is, I can play the appropriate part to meet most social situations that I have encountered. I will evaluate other people in a social situation before attempting to assume a dominant or assertive role. | .38, p<.0005 |

TABLE 3 (cont'd.)

| Subscales | Correlation with Interaction Involvement |
|---|---|
| Competence: | |
| I really enjoy interacting with people. | |
| I think I am a competent communicator. | .52, p<.0005 |
| *It takes considerable effort for me to carry on a conversation with someone. | |

*The polarity of these items was reversed before summation.